14: Born et al--567
116, 175

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Ifalik

On March 27 the government schooner "Ponape" returned to Oleaifrom a trip to Ifaluk, where it had gone on Sunday, March 24, because I [MR: Dr. Born] wished to investigate alleged excesses of foreign sailors against the natives of this atoll. The weather, which until then had been fine for weeks, was already beginning to change when we departed; contrary winds and squalls made the journey to the group, 35 miles from Oleai, take forty-two hours...After I had fulfilled my official obligations on the island, which I was visiting for the first time, the "Ponape,"...returned on the morning of Wednesday, March 27, to Oleai, arriving there in the afternoon, with a favorable wind, after a five and a half hour trip.

14: Born et al--567
116, 656

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

I [MR: Dr. Born] went ashore [MR: March 27, 1907], intending on Thursday to give the last language lesson for the natives, distribute medicines, and to give directions concerning the maintenance of the station for military police built by me. Departure for Yap was set for the 28th.

14: Born et al--567 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 133, 504 Ifalik

...we succeeded in negotiating the difficult entrance into the lagoon of the atoll, which winds between large coral blocks. On the chart only an entrance for small boats is shown, and ships usually anchor outside the reef at a depth of 9 to 16 fathoms.

Wednesday evening [MR: March 27, 1907] passed quietly with almost complete calm and beautiful moonlight. Early the next day several sharp thunderstorms passed over the islands from north and east, and a strong wind with rain squalls set in by fits and starts. The wind let up again and again after a short time, and then there was almost complete calm. From morning on a striking phenomenon was the ever stronger surf from the east and south, which had no relationship to the strength of the wind. Likewise, there appeared early in the morning numerous huge frigate birds, which hovered aimlessly back and forth over the island. I had not noticed these birds in Oleai before. In the usually quiet lagoon there was already a heavy sea at noon, rolling up on the sandy shore in mighty breakers. The first officer of the "Ponape" explained this phenomenon to me as the beginning of a spring-tide, which might be expected the next night (full moon). Towards one o'clock P.M. I went aboard the "Ponape" to consult with the captain about the weather. He told me that under the circumstances a departure that day was not to be considered, the barometer was falling sharply; there was the possibility of an approaching typhoon. He further declared that in such an event he would try to hold fast as long as possible in the lagoon. Finally, he asked me to stay on board because I would be safer than on land. However, considering the impossibility of bringing my bulky baggage on board now with the constantly heavier sea, I preferred to go ashore again.

In spite of the fact that astonishingly there was almost no wind, there was, [568] when I left the ship at about 2:30 P.M., a fearful sea, both on the outer reef and in the lagoon so that the "Ponape" had to change her anchoring place. Shortly after I left the ship a strong rain squall suddenly came blustering from the north-northeast, which struck the canoe I was in violently so that we almost sank. Summoning all their strength, the natives succeeded in holding the canoe and bringing it to land. Here I found my house already evacuated for during my absence powerful waves had come up over the 80 to 100 meter long dunes as far as the house. In the course of the next two and a half hours this whole dune, the eastern point of the island of Oleai, was washed away; there was now a wide passage between the islands of Oleai and Talian, and through this the waves coming over the outer reef from the northeast crashed wildly into the lagoon, where they met the equally heavy surf from the southwest so that the waves towered very high. At 5 o'clock, while I sat writing on the veranda, a heavy sea with slight wind again broke over the reef and, striking towards my house, it threw me several meters away through the splintered veranda railing. My left thigh was severely bruised by falling beams, which made walking very difficult for me and on the next day would have been almost disastrous. At 5:15 I sent a note to the captain of the "Ponape," in which I transmitted to him the advice of a Spaniard who was with me to move the anchorage of the "Ponape" near the village of Isang, under the protection of the northwestern point of Oleai. I thereupon received a note saying that the barometer was standing still and abating of the

wind was to be expected, but that on the other hand the surf would still increase. Shortly before 6 o'clock I had to abandon the already half demolished station; I moved back into the adjacent village of Leuleperik, where I took quarters in a recently finished finely built native house. Late in the evening the wind from the north-northeast began to grow still stronger so that branches of trees were already being broken off. From 1 A.M. on one heard through the whistling of the wind the constant snapping of branches like musketry fire and the crashing of huge falling trees like the thunder of cannon, above it all rose the thundering noise of the surf, but the houses stood firm through the whole night. Towards 5 o'clock we (the Spanish trader Villaçon and I) were awakened by the watch we had posted with the news that the waves were already striking in the village of Leuleperik and that there was already water around our lodging. Leuleperik is about 800 to 1,000 meters away from the northeast shore. The water rose so fast that we scarcely had time to give the most necessary instructions for saving the luggage. We hurried to the Japanese station, which is in the village of Jaur, at the widest part of the island, and in the middle of it. The way was already blocked by fallen coconut palms and other trees lying in all directions, in some places forming real barricades. In spite of the coconuts, branches and trees whistling down to the right and left of us, we reached the Japanese station without accident, and had there an open view of the lagoon to the south. The schooner "Ponape" was not to be seen. Glaring lightning flashed on the horizon in the west. The surf in the lagoon was already beating against the houses of the village. We

soon left the Japanese station and betook ourselves to the most westerly canoe house of the village of Jaur, where a large part of the inhabitants of the island had gathered. The people had completely lost their heads. Like birds in a cage unable to find their way out, they ran aimlessly back and forth, anxiously listening to the roar of the surf. No efforts to encourage or console them did any good. All believed that the sinking of the islands had come and that the old prophecy would now be fulfilled that Oleai would one day be washed away by the sea. When the sea began to come further and further inland from the lagoon, we had to abandon this place, too. The Japanese traders appeared and reported that a wave coming from the interior of the island had washed away their trading station in a moment. So we had to withdraw into the interior of the northwestern point of Ifang. That was our last recourse. If the sea reached this part of the island too we were lost. Here there stood a house on a little knoll in which a large crowd of screaming, weeping natives had taken refuge. Some women were singing death laments in their distress. When a man suddenly announced that the sea was now coming also from the northeast out of the bush, the confusion reached its climax. I climbed a broken down coconut palm and saw the waves, like white cats, leaping through the woods from the northeast. When I came down from the tree the water was up to my hips. We provided ourselves with planks of wood and strong [570] ropes and turned again to the lagoon side of the island. The water was fortunately rising slowly; the wind was weaker. Then we saw a mighty breadfruit tree which had been wrenched from the ground with all its

roots. We climbed up on these roots, which stood several meters high, and found ourselves relatively secure there. Scarcely had we found this place of refuge (it must have been about 9 in the morning) when the real typhoon set in from the east-southeast. It is impossible to describe the strength of this wind. It was as if a thousand express trains were racing close by our tree. The air was so full of rain and sea spray, mixed with sand, that is was impossible to see to a distance of even a few meters. Thus the storm raged uninterrupted until towards 3 in the afternoon, coming from east-southeast to southeast.

At this time it calmed a little. The sun even broke through, though veiled, for a few minutes, and it was now possible to orient ourselves. It turned out that we were quite close to the shore of the lagoon in the northwestern corner of the island. The water had fallen. Around us there stretched a wide desolate waste, the ground was covered meters high with fallen trees. Only now and then, where a blooming, delightful garden had been, did the bare stump of a breadfruit tree and some withered palms project. Far and wide there was no trace of human habitation. Only a few disordered heaps of ruins marked the places where the great canoe houses, filled with the pride of the natives, the artful high-sea canoes, fishing wier baskets and nets, had stood. There was no human being to be seen. When we approached the village of Jaur, we found the water there meter-high. Suddenly we saw two fantastic figures, youths, rubbed bright red all over their bodies, carrying a pig. We followed them and wading in water up to our hips we reached,

after difficult climbing stretches, the place in about the center of the island where the natives had already partly gathered again. It turned out that by good fortune none of the inhabitants of the island of Oleai had perished. A bivouac was quickly put up, huts constructed of bush work, and a fire lit. In this bivouac we spent the first night of pouring rain.

On Saturday, March 30, in the morning, the wind had let up considerably. We went to the shore and looked around. The sea was still wildly whirling and seething in the lagoon; there was no trace of the schooner "Ponape." A walk along the shore of the island showed us everywhere the same ghastly devastation. The islands of Paliau and Raur seemed to have suffered especially badly. At the place where the lovely island of Raur had been opposite Oleai, only a long, white sandbank with a few palms and tree stumps was to be seen. On the beach at Leuleperik we found the first victim of the catastrophe, the body of a boy about 5 years old....

14: Born et al--570 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 132, 173 Woleai

As to the question of the cause of this horrible catastrophe [MR: typhoon, March 1907] I should like to impart some observations which I made after the typhoon, but without the intention of drawing conclusions from them. It seems to me that it is not out of the question that volcanic, undersea eruptions had something to do with it. During the typhoon at 10 in the morning earthquakes could be felt; many pumice stones were washed ashore, which competent people said were lava. The whole atoll seemed even to the natives to have lifted since the high water mark had receded considerably. A new island emerged between Falalis and Motogosu, where, to be sure, there had already been a reef. This island is called Met and is supposed to have been inhabited long ago in the dim past. The native legend relates that a tidal wave washed it away in those days. Between the islands of Paliau and Oleai there used to be only a small passage, which was almost dry at low tide. Now, after the typhoon, this passage is very considerably widened and deepened. The reef bank between these two islands was cracked like a marble slab thrown on the floor; great pieces were split out of it. The ground on the islands of Paliau and Raur also looked as if shattered. On the outer reef of Raur, where the tidal wave had broken over it, there were three longish piles of coral rubble like little lonely islands. The outer reef side of the same two islands, formerly grown with thick bush, was a flat surface strewn with coral gravel, smooth and even as a table, where it had been exposed to the tidal wave. The direction of the tidal wave was presumably from east-northeast to west-southwest; its height cannot be given with certainty.

14: Born et al--570
116, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

When we approached the village of Jaur [MR: after the typhoon of March 1907 had passed], we found the water there meter-high. Suddenly we saw two fantastic figures, youths, rubbed bright red all over their bodies, carrying a pig. We followed them and wading in water up to our hips we reached, after difficult climbing stretches, the place in about the center of the island where the natives had already partly gathered again. It turned out that by good fortune none of the inhabitants of the island of Oleai had perished. A bivouac was quickly put up, huts constructed of bush work, and a fire lit. In this bivouac we spent the first night of pouring rain.

14: Born et al--571
116, 132, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

The accounts of those saved from Raur and Paliau unanimously gave the following picture of the events on those islands: As early as the evening of March 28, experienced people concluded from the peculiar roar of the surf that a tidal wave was approaching. So all precautions were taken to save the women and children, and they were fastened with ropes in the branches of breadfruit trees. On March 29, towards 8 in the morning, after the water had risen a meter and a half high on the island during the night, a dark cloud appeared with a terrifying whistling noise over the tops of the highest breadfruit trees, thus over 40 meters high: the tidal wave. It broke like a gigantic jet of water in the middle of the islands and poured with a terrific flood into the lagoon. However, this first tidal wave did not tear away the tightly bound people; but directly after the first came a second and still higher wave, which swept away all trees, houses and people. The lagoon at this moment was a great whirling eddy, into which the trees full of men were torn. Those who did not drown were crushed by the trees in the surf on the reef ledges.

14: Born et al--570-571 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 731 Woleai

When we returned to the camp [MR: after surveying the damage caused by the typhoon, March, 1907] the sound of loud crying and lamenting met our ears, not to cease all day. The first reports of tragedy had come in, and more and more were added. Only two inhabitants of the island of Raur had survived, a man and a woman. The loss of human life here came to a hundred and thirty. Nine inhabitants of the island had been on other islands during the typhoon, and had thus been saved. On Paliau fifty out of ninety inhabitants had perished, among them the able military policeman Jeuloch, who had drowned with his whole family in the attempt to save his wife and child. On Tageulap a woman had been killed by a falling house. Four women from the island of Saliap, who had been on Raur during the typhoon, had perished, 10 inhabitants of Utagal, five of Falalis, so that the total loss of human life came to two hundred. The number of injured was very great; but fortunately most of the wounds were not serious. I could give no assistance even to the slightly wounded since all my equipment of medicines and bandages as well as instruments, had been [571] lost. Throughout Saturday and on Easter Sunday the sea washed ashore many corpses, often horribly disfigured. Only with difficulty could the natives be persuaded to bury them. I should like to mention a few strange rescues; for instance, two children, a boy of five and a girl of eight, swam across the lagoon in the typhoon sea a knot and a half to Marijong. Several natives from Paliau were driven to Saliap, four from Raur to Utagal 4-1/2 knots away, two women and two men. The number thus saved was twelve.

14: Born et al--571-572 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 731 Woleai

The first concern after the typhoon [MR: March, 1907] was to collect the survivors of the completely destroyed islands of Raur and Paliau on Oleai in a joint bivouac. Here there prevailed admirable order and discipline among the natives so that in this respect no measures had to be taken. I want here to call attention to the fact that the natives most willingly complied with all my directions and that in the fourteen difficult days after the typhoon there was no case of disobedience or other disturbance.

The worry about a famine hung over us like a threatening spectre; it was so much the worse since, because of our uncertainty about the fate of the "Ponape," we had to expect to be without help until May 25 or 26 (that is, three to four days after the arrival in Jap of the Reich mail steamer "Germania" from Hongkong. So we immediately began collecting the masses of coconuts which were lying about; the taro which was still usable was brought from the fields, in which process the women had to dive to fish out the roots. Even days after the typhoon the water was two and a half to three meters deep in the large taro field on Oleai. All usable provisions were brought to special [572] huts and put in charge of the chiefs; they distributed the necessary rations several times daily to every individual, men, women and children.

14: Born et al--572 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 131 Ifalik

On March 26 we [MR: Capt. Martens] arrived at Ifaluk in the morning...According to astronomical observations Ifaluk is situated correctly on the chart as to latitude, but the longitude is 14 minutes too far to the east.

14: Born et al--572
116, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

An additional hard affliction was the dryness which set in after the typhoon. No rain fell up until the arrival of the "Germania" on April 11. The sun burned down pitilessly day after day on the ravaged islands. So we greeted the Reich mail steamer "Germania" which arrived unexpectedly on April 11 from Saipan, with large stores of provisions, as a true rescuer in distress. It also brought us the very cheering news that the "Ponape" had arrived safely in Saipan on April 4, after a very dangerous trip.

14: Born et al--572
116, 131

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

On March 19 we [MR: Capt. Martens] sighted Oleai...and anchored...by the island of Raur....According to our observations the lagoon is placed 12 to 14 minutes too far to the east on the chart.

14: Born et al--572 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 731 Woleai

While the people were all so busy gathering together the food, I set about to salvage the extensive stocks of the O'Keefe firm, which maintained a trading station on the island of Marijong. The station itself was completely levelled to the ground...By good fortune we succeeded in saving a large part of the stock, above all most of the provisions, so that we had enough food for six to eight weeks. The rice damaged by sea water was washed, then dried in the sun, and had to be eaten, in spite of the danger of beri-beri.

We made the ruins of the trading station into a raft on which we went over to Oleai, where we quickly put together a house in Isang. I took possession of a large part of the stock of goods and all the provisions, on account, for the district office, and distributed them as needed to the inhabitants of the worst damaged islands of Falalis, Raur, and Paliau, things such as covers, loin cloths, hatchets, knives, cooking pots. I also gave as much as possible of the indispensable tobacco to the unfortunate people.

14: Born et al--572-573 (1907) 1907 Woleaians-1-3
116, 502, 731 Woleai

We [MR: Captain Martens] reached Oleai again on the afternoon of March 27, 1907 and returned to the same anchorage....From...[MR: about 3 o'clock] sea watch was kept because the weather did not look good. At 5:15 we dropped the second anchor. A strong swell and sea without wind came up in the lagoon; trees and parts of houses were driven by the ship from the corners of the island, torn down by the breakers; it seemed to be a tidal wave, for there was not much wind. Rapid sinking of the barometer, however, warned me to expect trouble, and also the wind and sea were gradually rising considerably.

A full fledged typhoon blew on Friday, March 29 from 7:30 P.M. on. It is impossible for any of us to describe the strength of the wind. We took [573] on deck all the anchor chains we could find on board and made moorings as necessary with the increasing wind. We saw no more of the land then, though the moon was full. One squall followed another.

It must have been about 8:30 when we began to drift; even before that, at about 8 o'clock, all the boats, the gasoline in the galvanized tanks, and all the deck ladders, the chicken house and the joiner's bench were washed from the deck by heavy waves. How and by what route we went out of the lagoon no one can say, the ship was wheeling frightfully; no one could stay on his feet. We sat in life-jackets in the saloon and awaited the worst. On deck heavy waves were hurtling across from both sides; one would have been thrown overboard immediately. Around us trees, coconuts and plants of all kinds were swirling about, some of them thrown up onto the ship. From 10 in the morning on (the 29th) the

barometer began to rise; but the typhoon continued to rage. The sails were blown out into shreds between the rudders. Only the schooner sail stayed whole. Judging from the appearance of the water we must have been already outside the lagoon at 10 o'clock; it was not possible to confirm this by sounding.

Our little ship did very well, and thanks to her exceptional seaworthiness we survived the storm. Many times the ship was thrown over 40 to 45 degrees and completely enveloped in water, but she always righted herself in a few seconds, only to be thrown over again. We used quantities of oil to calm the sea. Towards noon we realized that a great deal of water must be in the ship. The bulkhead was broken down from the saloon, and now we saw that the water was up over the machine platform. Now I ordered volunteers to the pump, for to command anyone directly would have been an outrage; the heavy waves continued to break over the deck without cease. The machine pumps could not be used, because the batteries were completely destroyed. The water had come in chiefly through the ventilators on deck to starboard. At 4 o'clock the barometer had climbed to 29. 10, the sea continued high and rough, the typhoon continued to blow in full strength. I think it can be assumed that nothing is left of Oleai, for the trees which floated by us were all very large and came from the interior of the islands.

On Saturday March 30 it was squally, but somewhat brighter. I was not able to determine the ship's position, for the sun did not come through. In the afternoon we cleared out the hold, of necessity, and found there some dry rice. At 2:30 the corpse of

a native floated close by our ship on its back. The wind now declined steadily; the barometer rose slowly. There was still a heavy sea. On Sunday at noon I held a conference with my officers, in the course of which we decided to go to Saipan or possibly to Guam. For it was not possible to get to Jap, because the current was too strong towards the northwest and we did not have enough sail surface. The engines were not damaged and possibly usable.

From April 1 to 4 we had moderate weather. At daybreak on the morning of the 4th we sighted Tenian and Agiguan. We sailed and steamed towards Garapan. Shortly we sighted Saipan. At noon we anchored with our kedge-anchor in Tanapag harbor.

14: Born et al--573
116, 132, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

On April 11 in the evening the steamer [MR: "Germania"] anchored in the lagoon of Oleai. Dr. Born came aboard immediately.

Some of the islands which I [MR: district official Fritz] saw three months ago in the full splendor of their luxurious coconut groves, are wholly destroyed; only a few trees project from the heaps of fallen ones, standing, but without their tops; not a green leaf is to be seen.

14: Born et al--573
116, 165, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Ifalik

In all 225 people lost their lives on Ifaluk and Oleai [MR: in the typhoon of March 1907]. No Europeans perished.

14: Born et al--576
116, 167, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Ifalik

I [MR: district official Fritz] intend to move as many as possible of the population [MR: affected by typhoon of March 1907] to the Palau and Marianas Islands, and in fact, on the present trip of the "Germania," 200 to 300 from Ifaluk (in all over 400 inhabitants, 25 typhoon victims) to Palau, on the trip back 200 to 300 from Oleai (formerly a total of 1,000 inhabitants) to Saipan. The "Seestern" expected in July is then to visit the other islands in the east, which presumably were also struck by the typhoon, and bring as many people as possible to the Marianas.

14: Born et al--576 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 157, 731 Ifalik

On April 12 we [MR: district official Fritz] arrived at Ifalik and brought the people the share of the provisions allotted to them [MR: after the typhoon of March, 1907]. But none wanted to leave their destroyed home; much more, the ruling chief turned down my proposal. All depictions of the coming distress were useless; the chief frankly and rightly feared a lessening of power with the emigration of large numbers of his subjects. But I am convinced that when after a few months bitter want strikes, the obstinacy of this gentleman will yield of its own accord.

14: Born et al--576-577 (1907) 1907 Woleaians
116, 656, 731 Woleai

On Oleai, on the recommendation of Dr. Born, I [MR: district official Fritz] appointed a Spaniard from Jap, known to me as dependable, Julio Villaçon, as deputy of the administration, and gave him the task of putting through the following measures [MR: after the typhoon of March 1907]:

The distribution of the food brought with us and requisitioned by Dr. Born from the traders.

The preparation of planting land for the seed to be brought in on the returning "Germania" (sweet potatoes, taro, and others).

Looking out for the 200 to 300 emigrants to be taken to Saipan until the return of the "Germania."

Forbidding traders and natives to buy, sell, or export copra or coconuts since all fruit on hand is necessary for food. [577]

Forbidding traders and natives from crediting goods or objects in order to prevent the people from falling into debt servitude to foreign traders exploiting their plight.

14: Born et al--577
116, 441, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Woleai

The destruction of the copra trade [MR: after the typhoon of March 1907] for the duration of several years will probably result in the suspension again of the Japanese settlements on these islands. It is a matter of the branch establishments of the Jap firm Marutani and the Saipan firm Muragama. O'Keefe also has a trading station on Oleai.

14: Born et al--576
116, 241, 262, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Ifalik

According to my [MR: Fritz's] unfortunately extensive experience of typhoons, only a small number of the palms will recover [MR: following typhoon of March 1907], and will not bear fruit again for two or three years. On high islands (Saipan, Ponape, Jap) the natives are not so exclusively dependent on the coconut palm for food; large stretches are planted with tuberous plants and maize; in protected places breadfruit survives the storm, usually animal nourishment is available (Saipan). But on the low coral islands the life of the inhabitants depends almost entirely on the coconut palm, the breadfruit trees break down in the storm, the taro plants are washed away. For the next few months the fallen ripe and unripe nuts, the marrow of the fallen trees, can be used, but then threatens a state of emergency.